

2 POINTS LOST AS WANDERERS MISS CHANCES

By **STUART EARP** Bishop's Stortford 1, Wycombe Wanderers 1

FACING a side severely hit by injuries, Wycombe Wanderers gave a disappointing display at Bishop's Stortford on Saturday in dropping two Rothmans Isthmian League points.

Whether they were affected by the dismissal of manager Ted Powell during the week is debatable, but the Blues had more than enough chances to have sewn the game up by half time for they were clearly the superior side.

It must be said that they were often out of luck, twice hitting the woodwork and coming up against an in-form goalkeeper in the shape of Paul Kitson who always pulls out a bit extra against Wycombe. But those two efforts that struck the crossbar shouldn't have mattered, for Wanderers ought to have made full use of their wealth of possession.

The turning point came soon after half time when Stortford pulled out all the stops in a bid to throw Wycombe out of their stride—and succeeded. The Blues were panicked for 10 minutes, lost all their poise and command, and then found it too late to repair the damage.

Several players did their best to pull the match out of the fire, amongst them Mick Holifield who looked sharper and more aggressive than of late. Ian Pearson too, had a handful of brilliant individual runs that thoroughly deserved goals.

Other players were not as impressive. Paul Birdseye, back after injury, had one of his poorer games, frequently

wasting the ball while Peter Cruse and Steve Hill both struggled to make an impact on the match. Stortford's inspiration was left back Davis, who was everywhere prompting his men and leading by example.

One success for Wycombe in my view, was the inclusion of Tony Horseman as substitute. He created several chances with his distribution and it could be that 'Bodger' will still have a say in who takes the title this season. It would be nice to see him given a full game.

PROMISING

Things looked promising for Wycombe early on with Birdseye's long throws worrying the home back four. Wanderers had the strong wind behind them in the first half and powered forward with regularity as Stortford repeatedly lost the ball in midfield.

But the Blues were out of luck in the 23rd minute. Cruse found Birdseye making an inside break into the box and the right back cleverly squared the ball across. Holifield rose well and thumped in a header but the ball struck the crossbar and was cleared.

Wycombe's pressure was rewarded in the 28th minute. Pearson sent a left footed corner curling into the box. Kitson for once missed the

ball and Howard Kettleborough was on the far post to chest the ball over the line.

Still Wanderers continued to dominate and Pearson should have increased the lead after 33 minutes. He was put through on half way with Hill in close attendance. Full back Chattaway had two men to mark and chose to stay with Hill leaving Pearson a clear route to goal. But as Kitson advanced, the top marksman fired just wide of a post.

All this time, Peter Spittle, who came in for the injured John Maskell, had watched with interest but was seldom troubled by Stortford's paltry efforts. All the action was at the other end and the half ended with referee Maber getting in the way of Holifield as he prepared to shoot inside the box.

TIDE TURNS

Holifield began the new period with a great run to the bye-line which was quickly followed by a 30 yard shot from Bobby Davies. But then Stortford began to turn the tide. They upped their work rate and with Wycombe unable to slow the tempo the home side chased them into errors.

The tactic paid off in the 56th minute when Melwyn beat Davies for pace and caught Wycombe short of cover in the middle. Keith Mead missed his clearance and Peter Twigg stooped low to head home in-off the legs of Spittle.

Wanderers soon recovered from this set-back with Pearson making long in-roads into the Stortford defence. Wycombe, however, never found their earlier superiority and one or two players began making basic errors. Spittle and Birdseye were both guilty of miscuing the ball into touch on more than one occasion.

Horseman replaced Hill who suffered minor concussion after clashing with Davis near the trainer's bench and for the last quarter, Wycombe laid siege inside the home half. They amassed five corners in that time to add to the six earlier in the game while Stortford could manage only two.

The closest they came to a winner was five minutes from time. Seconds earlier Kitson had saved Kettleborough's downward header well but this time he was beaten as Alan Phillips headed a corner towards the top of the net. It looked a certain goal but the ball once again met the full face of the crossbar and with that chance went Wycombe's hopes of three points.

STORTFORD: P. Kitson; J. Chattaway, F. Flack, V. Clarke, B. Davis; A. Melwyn, T. Smith, G. Bailey, R. Tucker; K. Gaine, P. Twigg. Sub A. Gough (not used).
WYCOMBE: P. Spittle; P. Birdseye, K. Mead, A. Phillips, R. Davies; P. Cruse, J. Priestley, M. Holifield; I. Pearson, H. Kettleborough, S. Hill (sub A. Horseman 71 mins).

Referee: T. Maber.
Half-time: 0-1. **Goalscorers:** Stortford — Twigg (56). Wycombe — Kettleborough (11).